

A TRUE COPY

PS405
May 1948

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

~~SECRET~~

1951-34

Post: OI, HICOG, Frankfurt, Germany
Date Prepared: October 29, 1951
Reporting Officer: John A Conway

Name: TAESCHNER Herbert
(Surname) (Given name)
Nationality: German Title: _____
Position: Secretary General of East Zone LDP (also member of LDP
Zentralvorstand and Political Committee).
Date appointed: August 1950

Career and Personal Data:

Herbert Taeschner was born in Dresden on July 7, 1916, was brought up in the Lutheran Church, is married and has two children.

While studying at the Oberrealschule in Dresden-Johannstadt, he attended evening classes until 1934 at a business school in Dresden, where he studied stenography, typing and general business management. After that he worked in a Finance Office in Dresden, the Traffic Office in Dresden-Pirna, and the Construction Office in Heidenau, acquiring experience in administration, including personnel, finance and traffic matters. The Berlin Document Center has no record of his having belonged to the NSDAP or any of its major affiliates. Drafted into the Reichsarbeitsdienst in 1937, he served in it until he was drafted into the Army in 1938.

Taeschner served as a clerk with the following units in the Wehrmacht: 1938, 13th Engineer Battalion, Pirna; August 1939, Engineer School, Dessau-Rosslau; July 1941, Higher Engineer Leadership, Panzer ACK 1, on the Russian front; June 1944, on staff of an Infantry Division in Greece; September 1944, Engineer unit in Kattowitz.

After 1945 Taeschner became active in the Soviet-Zone LDP, and held various party positions until he became Secretary General of the Saxony LDP, (He and Johannes KIECKMANN were together on the Landesvorstand until 1949.) Taeschner held this position in November 1949, at the time of the first German Congress of Professor Ulrich NOACK's "Nauheimer Kreis" held at Rengsdorf in the Rhineland, and was reported at that time to have attended the congress. He was on the Presidium of the Land Committee of the National Front in Saxony, and in June 1950 one report stated that he had been selected as a National Front propaganda speaker in West Germany. In June 1950 he replaced

~~SECRET~~

Att-S.
WA S FRAN-CIA-PTS 6

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3828
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

SECRET

Wolfgang KRESSER as a member of the DDR Volkskammer, and he has been in the Volkskammer since then, having been reelected in October 1950.

Taeschner has been Secretary General of the LDP since August 1950, when he succeeded Günther STIMPEL, who had been arrested by the SSD. It was expected at first that as Secretary General Taeschner would handle organizational matters and leave political questions to Joachim FLATAU. Flatau at the time was Chief of the Political Department of the LDP Main Business Office and deputy to Taeschner, as he had been deputy to Stempel. However, in September 1950 Taeschner discharged Wilhelm JOHN as Chief Editor of the LDP's principal newspaper Der Morgen (East Berlin) and replaced him with Flatau, after John had refused to accept Flatau on the editorial staff. In the LDP Main Business Office Taeschner now heads the Central Press Office (with Flatau as his deputy) and Main Department "C" (Administration, Training, Finance). The result of these changes has been to give Taeschner more complete control of the party work in LDP headquarters. He was reelected to the Zentralvorstand at the LDP Zonal Convention held from June 30 to July 2, 1951, and at its first meeting on August 29, 1951 the new Zentralvorstand reelected him LDP Secretary General. As Secretary General Taeschner receives a monthly salary of DM 1200. and in addition a DM 400 expense account.

Taeschner is also a member of the Zentralvorstand of the "Society for German-Soviet Friendship" (since January 1951), and was elected to the DDR Peace Flebiscite Committee formed in May 1951. He was one of a DDR delegation which flew to Moscow in November 1950 to take part in the October Revolution celebrations.

After his appointment as Secretary General of the Zonal LDP his main residence continued to be at Lenbachstrasse 4, Dresden. In addition he keeps a small apartment in Berlin. His wife Gertraude nee HOPFE, whom he married on May 29, 1943, still lives in Dresden with their two children: Claus-Petlev, born September 9, 1947, and Heinz-Jürgen, born in September 1949.

Taeschner is about 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighs about 190 lbs; he has an aquiline nose and very thin light brown hair. He claims to speak English well and French fairly well. His secretary and close friend is one Ilse CHRISTOPH. He is said to be a domineering individual, and (despite the above report of his selection as a National Front speaker) his talent as an orator apparently does not match his organizational ability. His lectures on his visit to the U.S.S.R. in November 1950 were said to be "very general and poorly received".

Influence in the LDP:

In his present position and with his administrative experience Taeschner undoubtedly wields great influence in the LDP. He is regarded as pro-Soviet and pro-SED, although there are indications that his attitude may be an

SECRET

SECRET

~~was deleted~~ His quota of laudatory pro-Soviet articles appears in the LDP press, and he has evidently purged at least one LDP report of "unpleasant" details before passing it on to the SCGG Information Division.

A report in December 1950 stated that Taeschner intended to dismiss all LDP employees who lived in West Berlin, and had replaced those already dismissed with people from Saxony; LDP employees, it stated, were speaking of a "Saxonisation" of party headquarters. It is worth noting in this regard that three of the five LDP Deputy Chairman are from Saxony, and two of the three, Konzok and Gerlach, were elected in July 1951, when Taeschner was already Secretary General. (The other Deputy Chairman from Saxony is Johannes DIECKMANN.) It may be noted too in passing that the DDR Cabinet formed in November 1950 has three LDP State Secretaries all of whom are from Saxony. There is no evidence that this last is due to Taeschner; in fact Taeschner has been said to have ambitions of becoming a State Secretary himself. In any event, whether or not Taeschner had a part in any of the aforementioned cases, it is likely that they have contributed to the popular talk of "Saxonisation".

Taeschner was one of those in the LDP who were very active in attacking Dieckmann's brother-in-law Dr. Walter THURMER, who had long been persona non grata to the SED and the Soviets. The following is indicative of certain personal relationships in the LDP: In early 1951 Loch, Taeschner and Konzok accused Thürmer of not fulfilling his duties as Minister of Health in Land Saxony. Meanwhile Taeschner and Loch discussed the question of dismissing Thürmer as Minister, and at the first meeting of the new LDP Zentralvorstand on August 29, 1951, over Dieckmann's protests, Thürmer was relieved of his post. Further evidence of Taeschner's aggressive attitude toward Dieckmann appeared at the same meeting, when it was decided that an LDP member may not be a member of the Volkskammer and of a Landtag at the same time. Dieckmann, who would be among those personally affected by the new decision, protested. However he was overruled after Taeschner pointed out that a person holding two mandates earns an excessive amount of money and deprives another LDP member of a mandate.

The evidence is less clear regarding Taeschner's attitude toward Hermann KASTNER, Soviet collaborator who was deposed by his colleagues as LDP Chairman in July 1950. What little evidence there is is several months old and suggests that Taeschner may have written off Kastner in his calculations for his own advancement. Since his expulsion Kastner has been attempting to recover lost ground and has circulated a number of rumors with a view to boosting his own stock. In February 1951 he allegedly stated that Taeschner had approached him after receiving instructions from the SCGG that Kastner was to be reinstated as LDP Chairman. In June 1951, however (according to an F-6 report), Kastner stated that Taeschner was being investigated. What could possibly have happened in the interval is that Kastner approached Taeschner and the latter showed no interest. Max REINHOLD (former LDP mayor of East Berlin and an alleged Kastner supporter and Soviet informant) also

SECRET

SECRET

stated several months ago that Taeschner was under investigation.

While many of these rumors may be traceable to the Kastner group, there still is reason to think that Taeschner may at some time have been the subject of an investigation. In fact in July and August 1951 there appears to have been some question of his continuance as LDP Secretary General. At that time it appeared that Taeschner himself would succeed Thirmer as Land Saxony Health Minister, since a large villa in Dresden had been assigned to Taeschner by the Land government, and he had bought furniture in Berlin and had it shipped to Dresden. (CIC - B-2). Such an appointment would have been a step down for Taeschner, and why it was for a time considered as a matter of speculation. According to the above CIC report, it was rumored that the LDP leadership felt that Taeschner was becoming too influential in the party. The two principal candidates at that time to succeed Taeschner as Secretary General were said to be Helmut WITTIG and Kurt WUENSCHKE, two Main Department Chiefs in the LDP Main Business Office. Wittig was Taeschner's aide and had had the reputation of consulting Taeschner and closely following his advice in making his decisions. Taeschner, however, was said to be opposed to Wittig as his successor, since he felt that Wittig would create a clique of his own within the party and thus detract from Taeschner's influence. Taeschner himself was reported to favor the twenty-one year old Wuenschke, who he thought would continue to be dependent on him.

It is not known what factors headed off this development. However, from Taeschner's reelection as Secretary General on August 29, 1951, which according to the LDP press was unanimous, his present status would appear to be as secure as any LDP politician's could be. He seems to be on good terms with both the rival Co-Chairman, Loeh the Soviet protégé, and Hamann the favorite of the LDP rank and file. Taeschner is reported to have fully supported Loeh as candidate for Chairman in June 1950, and he is clearly on Loeh's side in the latter's feud with Dieckmann. On the other hand the LDP press reported that, at the August 29 meeting, Hamann nominated Taeschner for reelection and praised his past work.

One thing that Taeschner's unanimous reelection seems to show is that, in collaborating with the SED and the Soviets, he has thus far avoided being labeled "Soviet agent" by his party colleagues. From available evidence, it would appear that he is ready to collaborate with the SED and the Soviets precisely as far as he considers necessary to maintain or extend his own influence.

Principal sources:

1. Headquarters 66th CIC Detachment
2. Berlin Document Center
3. East Zone Press
4. HICOG Biographic files

Prepared by /s/ John A. Conway
JOHN A. CONWAY
Foreign Service Officer

SECRET